

Standard 8-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the American Revolution—the beginnings of the new American nation and South Carolina’s part in the development of that nation.

8-2.4. Summarize events related to the adoption of South Carolina’s first constitution, the role of South Carolina and its leaders in the Continental Congress, and the ratification of the United States Constitution, including Henry Laurens’s actions, Charles Pinckney’s role, and the importance of issues debated during the Philadelphia Convention for South Carolina. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand/ Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 3rd grade, students summarized the effects of the American Revolution in South Carolina, including the establishment of a new nation and a new state government and capital (3-3.3)

In 4th grade, students explained the political and economic factors leading to the American Revolution, including the French and Indian War; British colonial policies such as the Stamp Act, the Tea Act, and the so-called Intolerable Acts; and the American colonists’ early resistance through boycotts, congresses, and petitions (4-3.1).

In United States History, students will summarize the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system, the rule of law and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the royal governors (USHC 2.1). Students will summarize the creation of a new national government, including the new state constitutions, the country’s economic crisis, the Founding Fathers and their debates at the Constitutional Convention, the impact of the Federalist Papers, and the subsequent ratification of the Constitution (USHC 2.4).

It is essential for students to know:

South Carolina adopted its first constitution even before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was written by the provincial government and was to serve as the foundation of government until the disagreements with England could be resolved. The constitution provided for a two house legislature with the lower house elected by the people and the upper house elected by the lower house. The president, who was elected by the legislature, had the right to veto laws. The lowcountry had more representation in the new government than did the Upcountry. A second constitution was written after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, however, it included only a few changes. The president would now be called the governor, representation was more equally distributed and the Church of England was no longer the official, state-supported church of South Carolina

In the First **Continental Congress**, the South Carolina representatives were wealthy men from the lowcountry [John Rutledge, Edward Rutledge, Thomas Lynch, Henry Middleton and Christopher Gadsden (8-2,1)]. When the congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, the South Carolina representatives assumed important roles. One prominent South Carolinian [John Rutledge] served on the committee that drafted a letter to the British people explaining the colonist’s position. Others [Lynch and Gadsden] served on a committee which designed an agreement stating the colonists would not to buy or sell any British goods. At the Second Continental Congress, the South Carolina delegation, like delegations of several other colonies, were at first split on the issue of independence and voted against independence. However on the second vote, they voted in favor of independence. There is no historical explanation for this change. Four South Carolinians signed the Declaration of Independence—Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, Thomas Lynch Jr., and Thomas Heyward, Jr. (8-2.1). **Henry Laurens** served as president of the Continental Congress and on the committee that negotiated the Treaty of Paris.

[The problems of the United States government under the Articles of Confederation were similar to the economic problems of indebtedness and depression faced by South Carolinians after the Revolutionary War. Political tensions between the Lowcountry and the Upcountry played a prominent role in the ratification of the Constitution. Therefore, it would be chronologically appropriate to address 8-2.5 before addressing the writing of the Constitution.]

South Carolinians also played a role in the writing of the Constitution in 1787. The **Philadelphia Convention** was called to solve the problems of the government under the Articles of Confederation. **Henry Laurens** and **Charles Pinckney** were selected as delegates. However, Laurens was unable to attend due to illness. Pinckney and the other delegates from South Carolina took positions on all of the subjects that were debated. On the issue of amending the Articles or writing a new constitution, the South Carolinians supported the establishment of a stronger national government in a new constitution. They supported the creation of a three branch government with a legislature, judiciary, and executive, as proposed in the Virginia Plan. On the issue of how representation was to be allocated in the new legislature, they supported the plan that based representation on population supported by large states [Virginia Plan] rather than the plan that called for equal representation of the states that was supported by the smaller states [New Jersey Plan]. This would give South Carolina and other populous states more voice in the new government. However, South Carolina supported the Great Compromise that provided for equal representation in the Senate and proportional representation in the House of Representatives. The compromise raised the issue of whether or not slaves should be counted for the purposes of determining representation in the new government. Of course, South Carolina, as a slaveholding state, wanted slaves to be counted. Northern states did not. South Carolina did not support the Three-Fifths Compromise that resolved this debate. South Carolina delegates were also concerned that a stronger national government might attempt to regulate trade. They objected to any regulation of exports since South Carolina exported its cash crops and they feared any control of the international slave trade. A compromise was reached that promised that the federal government would not tax exports or attempt to regulate the international slave trade for at least 20 years. On the issue of how strong the president should be, they supported a strong executive with a term of six or seven years. As representatives of the elite, they advocated an aristocratic republic in which only property owners could hold office. Although South Carolina delegates did not get everything they wanted in the Constitution, they were satisfied with the new document and returned to South Carolina to lobby for its ratification. .

The **South Carolina ratifying convention** was held in Charleston despite the fact that the state capital had already been moved to Columbia. Not only did the Lowcountry elite have more representation, just as they did in the state legislature, but it also was easier for even non delegates to influence the proceedings that were held in their city. The backcountry men lived too far away to have a voice. These backcountry opponents of the new constitution were called the anti-Federalists because they opposed a stronger federal government. They feared that the elite would have too much power in such a government and abuse the rights of the individual. They also feared that the national government would be located far away from the people who had enough trouble influencing their own state government. Charles Pinckney and other members of the elite, who called themselves Federalists, argued for a strong government that could be influential in foreign affairs and establish better trade relations that would restore economic stability. The anti-Federalists were outvoted and South Carolina ratified the Constitution, thus making it the 8th state to join the United States of America.

It is not essential for students to know:

Students do not need to know the specific contents of South Carolina's first constitution, nor the name of the state's first president. Although students should know that the South Carolina delegation to the Second Continental Congress was split on the issue of independence, they do not need to know that Lynch, Middleton and Rutledge wanted to find a peaceful solution to the disagreements with Great

Britain, Gadsden wanted independence from Great Britain and Edward Rutledge talked of independence but really wanted a peaceful solution. Students do not need to know the specific roles of members of the South Carolina delegation to the Philadelphia Convention. For instance, they need not know that Charles Cotesworth Pinckney helped to develop the compromise on the slave trade. They do not need to know that Charles Pinckney added the amendment that no religious test should be required of any office holder. Students do not need to know that Pierce Butler recommended to the convention that the new government become effective once nine states had ratified the constitution. They do not need to know that John Rutledge served on the writing committee that submitted the first draft of the constitution. Students do not need to read all of the United States Constitution. However, they should have a working knowledge of the three branches of government so that they can understand information contained in subsequent indicators. Students do not need to know the names of the leaders of the Anti-Federalists such as Rawlin Loundes and Thomas Sumter.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments would require students to **summarize** events related to the adoption of South Carolina's first constitution. Students should be able to **summarize** the role of South Carolina and its leaders in the Continental Congress, including Henry Laurens's actions. They should be able to **explain** the positions taken by South Carolina on the issues that arose at the Philadelphia Convention and Charles Pinckney's role there. Students should be able to **compare** the positions of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists on the ratification of the new constitution and **explain** how the political tension between the Lowcountry and the Upcountry impacted those positions.